condition under which specific characters, or what are so deemed, become modified.

The bearing of the phænomena of development upon the solution of the great problem of the natural system of classification is rapidly becoming appreciated, and day by day the inadequacy of a single adult specimen, or pair, for the scientific illustration of a species is becoming more obvious, but especially in the department of conchology.

I could say much more on a theme so suggestive as the collection of shells now offered to the British Museum by Mr. Cuming, but I fear that I have already trespassed too long on your attention in adverting to the more prominent features of its scientific character. Of its money value I cannot speak from my personal experience as a collector, but of all objects of natural history shells are those of which the current or market-price is most easily determined. Their texture, durability and colour give them something of the character of precious stones, and one molluscous production, the pearl, takes rank among the gems of price. The value of a shell, as of a jewel, depends, no doubt, much upon its rarity, and is to that extent artificial. The *Concha unica* which today commands the sum of twenty pounds, shall next week, when a score of specimens have come into the market, fall in price to as many shillings. Still, the commonest exotic shell, if it be perfect and well-coloured, and taken from a living mollusk, as is the case with the Cumingian collection, from which 'dead' shells have been strictly excluded, finds its market.

I am given to understand, by competent authorities, that the sum of £6000, asked by Mr. Cuming in 1846, does not exceed two-thirds of the most moderate estimate of the present market value of his subsequently augmented collection. That ten times that sum would not bring together such a series as Mr. Cuming has offered to the British Museum, I do firmly believe, from a knowledge of the peculiar tact in discovering and collecting, the hardy endurance of the attendant fatigue under deadly climes and influences, and the undaunted courage in encountering the adverse elements, and braving the opposition of the savage inhabitants of seldom-visited isles, which have conduced and concurred to crown the labours of Mr. Cuming with a success of which his unrivalled collection is a fitting monument, and of which science, and, let us hope, its cultivators in his native country more particularly, will long continue to reap the benefits.

Believe me, my dear Sir, yours sincerely,

Royal College of Surgeons, January 1848. Richard Owen.

SAGINA CILIATA (FRIES).

This curious little plant was found near Thetford in Suffolk by the Rev. W. W. Newbould on June 6, 1847. It agrees so nearly with the description and specimens of Fries that I have no doubt of its identity with his plant. The differences are, that its stems are erect rather than diffuse, and the leaves are nearly or quite devoid of cilia; both of which seem rather the marks of a variety than of specific

distinctness. Concerning the latter, Fries himself, when writing about *S. ciliata*, says, "cilia foliorum plus minus distincta, sæpe decidua:" he also says, "capsula . . . matura nutans," but his own specimens show that this is too strong an expression; for although nodding whilst the fruit ripens, they become erect at the time of maturity when the capsule opens and the seeds are shed. *S. patula* (Jordan), Obs. sur Pl. Nouv. de la France, i. t. 3, is very similar to our plant, but differs by having numerous gland-tipped hairs on its sepals and the upper part of the peduncle. To it probably belongs the *S. ciliata* of Reichenbach, both of his 'Fl. Excurs.' and 'Icones Plant.' v. tab. 200. f. 4956, and *S. depressa*, f. 4957, unless the protruded capsule of the former should be considered as distinguishing it. Neither of them can be the *S. ciliata* of Fries, since they are both figured and described as having glandular-pilose peduncles and calyx. The following seems to be the distinctive character of our plant:—

S. ciliata (Fries!); stem elongated, branches diffuse or ascending, leaves linear awned, *outer sepals acute* longer than the petals and shorter than the capsule, apex of the peduncles reflexed after flowering ultimately erect.—Sven. Bot. t. 562, not *Reich.*—Glabrous; central stem elongated and fertile. Leaves with or without cilia at their base, tipped with a long bristle. Calyx of mature fruit adpressed to the capsule. Tubercles on the seeds blunt.—The figure quoted above from the 'Sven. Bot.' is far from good. It represents all the sepals as gradually narrowed into a long acute point. Not so the specimens published under Fries's own superintendence (Herb. Norm. Suec. i. 42), which resemble ours in this respect, having two shortly acute sepals and two only pointed or cuspidate ones.—C. C. B.

CAREX BRIZOIDES (LINN.).

I am indebted to Mr. William Stevens of the Drumlanrig gardens for specimens of this addition to the flora of Britain, which was discovered in July 1844 by Mr. W. MacIvor in Studley Wood, Yorkshire. Its specific character may be stated as follows:—*C. brizoides* (L.); spikelets several all simple contiguous sterile at their base alternate in a simple spike, stigmas 2, fruit lanceolate plano-convex bifid at the end serrated from near the base, nut (elliptical beaked and stalked?), glumes rather shorter than the fruit, *root creeping*, bracts short or none.—Reich. Icon. Fl. Germ. viii. tab. 207. fig. 548; Hoppe Car. Germ. in Sturm Deutschl. Fl. tab. *a*. 23.—Stem a foot high. Glumes acute, silvery brown. Leaves long, slender, equalling or overtopping the spikes. Rhizoma creeping extensively. —C. C. B.

Some Contributions to the Natural History of the Rafflesia Patma.
By M. ZOLLINGER, M. Bat. Soc. &c.

This flower, which still continues a problem in botany and a rarity in the collections of botanists, appears not to be so scarce as has hitherto been believed. I know that it occurs on the south coast of Java on the hills near the boundaries of the Residencies of Passarú wan